

News Line 8

October 1999

Liberal International's New Acting President

Following Frits Bolkestein resignation as President of Liberal International, **Annemie Neyts Utterbroeck** became acting president of Liberal International. She combines this position with her post as Minister in the Brussels Regional Government. A woman-size job! We have sent her our congratulations and good wishes.

New Members

We are delighted to welcome our 16th Group member, the Directiva Nacional de las Mujeres Liberales del Partido Liberal Constitucionalista de Nicaragua.

We are also delighted to welcome Baroness Sarah Ludford, Member of the European Parliament as individual member.

Liberal Women's Achievements

In an all party ballot, the UK Liberal Democrats elected Women Liberal Democrats' Treasurer, Sue Kramer, as the Party's candidate for Mayor of London. She won 62% of the vote.

Meher Khan, former Liberal Democrat Mayor of Waltham Forest, UK, has received Pakistan's Star Woman of the Year A ward.

Executive Committee Liberal International: Managua September 1999

The 163rd meeting of the Liberal International Executive was held in Nicaragua and was attended on behalf of INLW by Elizabeth Sidney, Chair, and Marie Thérèse Bianchi, Secretary General.

At the meeting, we reported on INLW's continuing growth and activities and on the support we have raised for abolition of FGM. Our proposal for improving the participation of women in Liberal International, which requires essentially that party's delegations to LI Congress should have no more than 60% delegates of the same sex was accepted for discussion. The same rule should apply to committees within LI. The Executive Committee will debate this proposal in its next meeting.

The Nicaraguan Liberals had arranged an interesting programme which enabled us to see something of the country, its political and cultural vitality, and its considerable economic and environmental problems. We learned that Nicaragua has the best programme on elimination of landmines in Central America. Important news in view of the horrific effects of landmines on families and habitats.

Meeting with Nicaraguan Liberal Women

After the conclusion of the LI Executive, in Managua, Elizabeth and Marie Thérèse stayed on for a meeting with Nicaraguan women. This was admirably organised by Dr Myriam Fonseca Lopez, President of the PLC Women's Group and the only woman among the 18 Directors of the Party's National Commission for Financial Supervision.

Fifty women from all parts of Nicaragua attended, representing the party's women organisation as well as local councils and NGOs.

We told them about INLW activities and then heard a comprehensive report on the status of women in Nicaragua given by Dr Rosa Argentina Lopez, Director of the Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer. Several delegates described their campaign to improve women's conditions and women's representation in decision making.

The day concluded with a resolution that the PLC women's organisation would join INLW and that together both organisations would organise a seminar for Liberal women throughout Central America, to be held in spring 2000, in view of establishing a Federation of Liberal Women of Central America. Copies of the resolution were signed by Dr Myriam Fonseca Lopez and Violeta Barreto Arias on behalf of the Nicaraguan Liberal Women, and by Elizabeth Sidney and Marie Thérèse Bianchi on behalf of INLW.

(Spanish text of resolution is included in annex).

National Women's Liberal Commission: Montreal's meeting

Marie Thérèse Bianchi, Secretary General of INLW, attended the national executive meeting of the National Women Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada, held in Montreal on September 9/12/99.

The President of NWLC, Mobina Jaffer -who is a member of INLW Board of Management, reviewed the activities of the Canadian organisation, a very well managed group of women from the whole of Canada. The meeting was the occasion to discuss the organisation of the INLW General Meeting, which will take place on October 26, 2000, in Ottawa, Canada.

Women's Rights Seminar

Zayda Rodriguez, member of INLW, attended the Women's Rights Seminar organized by the Human Rights International Alliance, in London on September 17. The seminar heard reports on violation of Women's rights in different countries. According to a report on the human rights abuse against North Korean women, famine-stricken North Korean women have opted to be sold to the Chinese for mere survival. They live a substandard life as sex slaves or private property of the Chinese. Another paper underlined the situation of women in Pakistan where the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan estimates that eight women are raped every day in Pakistan, and where the practise of honour killing is on the increase.

Barbro Westerholm new task

Best wishes to Barbro Westerholm, our Convener for many years before we became a formal Organisation. Barbro and the Swedish Liberal Women's Group gave INLW great support in our early years. Barbro was a distinguished Liberal member of the Swedish Parliament then and until this year. She has now left Parliament and become Chairperson of the Swedish Federation of Senior Citizens. We congratulate the Federation and wish Barbro every success in her new activity.

Female Genital Mutilation

INLW has strongly supported Martina Gredler's campaign to have the threat of FGM accepted as a threat of torture, and as a reason for granting asylum. In U.K. as a result of INLW initiative, the Women Liberals Democrats successfully piloted a resolution through the Liberal Democrats Conference in September, urging all authorities to be vigilant against the practice and to educate everyone about its appalling consequences.

Preparation for Beijing Plus Five

The March meeting of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women will be devoted to preparations for the June meeting, Beijing Plus Five, when world progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will be reviewed.

Dates: NGO Briefing, 27th February 2000; CSW Prepcom, 28th February - 17th March 2000. INLW members planning to attend are reminded that they need to register with the UN Division for the Advancement of Women now! Please let Elizabeth know if you plan to go, so that we know who will be in the INLW delegation.

Please also let Elizabeth know if your Party or country particularly wants to highlight successes or limitations in implementation of the PfA which we should raise at these meetings.

The European Commission plans a meeting to determine EU progress in implementation, currently scheduled for December 4-5 1999. The European Women's Lobby is preparing an alternative report. Check with the EWL website (www.womenlobby.org/agenda2000).

There will not be an NGO Forum at the Beijing plus Five meeting 5-9 June 2000 but an NGO Working Session will be held on June 3-4 2000, and NGO activities are planned to be held in parallel with the formal meeting.

Publications

Violencia Social en Centroamérica. CRIES (Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales) Managua, Nicaragua 1999.

En septiembre de 1997, la CRIES inició la ejecución del proyecto "Gobernabilidad y Seguridad Ciudadana" con el objetivo de abrir una línea de investigación especializada en primera instancia, con el análisis de las situaciones de violencia e inseguridad ciudadana en cuatro países centroamericanos. En capítulo dedicado a Nicaragua la violencia de género e intrafamiliar es analizada. Las violaciones realizadas a mujeres durante el período 1990-1991 aumentaron tres veces más que la actividad delictiva generalizada para el mismo período. Desde 1992 la tendencia a la aumentación de este delito se mantiene.